

## **Ethnic Difference in Education in the United Kingdom**

1. **Stream:** Migrants, Ethnic Minorities and Social Policy
2. **Summary:** The UK is rapidly changing and becoming more diverse which imposes greater challenges to already stretched schools which makes understanding the interaction between education and ethnicity all the more important. This study forms part of a three-year research project entitled 'Ethnic differences in education and diverging prospects for urban youth in an enlarged Europe' (EDUMIGROM). Using quantitative and qualitative data techniques to explore pupils' lived experiences at school and classroom level in three multicultural schools in one northern city this paper focuses on key aspects of inter-ethnic relations as perceived by BME and white pupils. It will also discuss the complex issue of identity formation as approached by the interviewees in terms of group-belonging. Further, in-depth analysis will be given by the study about pupils' perceptions of the meaning of 'ethnic' identification in their daily life; the sources of pride and shame that they owe to ethnicity as well as experiences with various forms of discrimination. The paper will introduce variations in school experiences and the major factors that shape them, and will show their implications for past and projected educational careers.
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### *Introduction*

This study forms part of a three-year research project entitled 'Ethnic differences in education and diverging prospects for urban youth in an enlarged Europe' (EDUMIGROM). Overall the project conducted a comparative investigation in ethnically diverse communities with second-generation migrants in nine countries of the European Union. The UK's focus was Caribbean and Pakistani pupils as they display the lowest levels of General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) attainment at national level. To provide some contextual evidence, examination of GCSE results at national level indicates that gender intersects closely with ethnicity. 27% of Caribbean boys and 44% of Caribbean girls achieved five or more A\*-C grade GCSEs. Similarly 38% of Pakistani boys against 53% of Pakistani girls. While the gender divide is consistent across all BME groups, GCSE underperformance the same cannot be said to apply to ethnicity. Chinese pupils are the most likely ethnic group to achieve five or more GCSE grades A\*-C in England, although this again shows gender differentiation with 70% of Chinese boys compared to 79% of Chinese girls.

All pupils in this study were in Year 10 at secondary school and were either 14 or 15 years old. The sample consisted of a fairly equal gender mix. The majority of the overall sample lived in inner city areas. As expected the majority of Pakistani and Caribbean pupils in all three schools lived in inner city areas.

This paper is organised into two parts. The first discusses the quantitative data taken from community-level surveys in three schools. The second discusses the findings of the community study which was composed by school and minority group case reports, local archival work, focus-group discussions, and personal interviews.

### **The Survey Report**

This section gives an analytical account of the UK's quantitative survey run among 434 Year 10 pupils in three multicultural secondary schools in 2008-2009. Besides providing brief data and descriptions of the basic demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the sample, it focuses on key aspects of inter-ethnic relations as perceived by Pakistani and Caribbean pupils.

#### *Disparities in evaluating living standards*

This relied on the data that the Student Questionnaire asked about family background and living conditions. The majority of all pupils cited themselves as living on an average level although the evaluation of what this encompassed was relative. There was strong differentiation in pupils' views of living standard between the school contexts. A higher proportion of Pakistanis and Caribbeans living in inner city areas described their economic situation as wealthy at School 1, whereas the majority of middle class Whites said they lived on an average level. Predominantly the school's population was White and middle class living in the surrounding suburbs. Pupils therefore seem to relate their family's standard across ethnic lines so that whites compare themselves to ordinary Englishmen. Pakistanis and Whites were equal in the number of pupils who rated themselves as poor (4% and 5% respectively). Caribbeans however constituted 16 %

Data at PLASC<sup>1</sup> level indicated that there are young people in the three Schools who live at impoverished level but there was limited indication of this in the survey's findings. There was a greater spread of response in Schools 2 and 3. Significantly no one at School 2 indicated themselves as poor whereas at School 3 8% of all White pupils and 22% of all Pakistani pupils said they were poor. No Caribbeans did. This is significant in terms of the fact that a large proportion of pupils are entitled to FSM at these two Schools.

#### *School context does not impact significantly on pupil outcomes*

Did sending disadvantaged students to the predominantly middle class affluent School 1 significantly affect their attainment levels? To examine this, the performance of disadvantaged pupils attending School 1 was correlated with the performance of pupils attending Schools 2 and 3. Disadvantaged children attending School 1 did not achieve higher levels than peers at Schools 2 and 3. Since these schools are situated in

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<sup>1</sup> Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC) data is collected nationally through Local Education Authorities (LEAs) by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES). This data allows social background to be measured through eligibility for Free School Meals (FSM).

deprived areas with a mono class intake, results would indicate that social class remains a key explanatory factor in underachievement regardless of the context of the school. It was beyond the scope of this research but it would be an interesting point of comparison to see how middle class children perform at low-performing inner city schools.

*All pupils understood further education (FE) and higher education (HE) as improving prospects but financial constraints make it unobtainable as a goal*

Policy rhetoric espousing the value and need to engage in further education (with the emphasis being upon employment as the main route out of poverty) does seem to have had an impact on individual students which cuts across ethnicity lines. 70% of White pupils, 72 % of Pakistani pupils and 74% of Caribbean pupils intend to continue studying after GCSEs which is a fairly optimistic indicator that pupils are motivated, have raised aspirations and subscribe to the endorsed view that education brings better prospects. This is a significant finding since in Northcity the proportion of people without any qualifications stands at 32 % which is slightly below that of the region (33%) but above the national average (29%). Moreover according to existing statistics people of Caribbean and Pakistani ethnicity are less likely to engage in further education. The Pakistani community in particular is twice as likely to have no qualifications compared to the average for NorthCity. It is important to understand the factors that put these pupils at risk. For Caribbean boys we know behavioural factors are a concern. Attending the more successful School 1 did little to engage enthusiasm so school context cannot be viewed as a primary factor.

To some extent findings would indicate that some pupils feel they have no control over their destiny. Of the pupils who did not expect to continue studying the main reason cited was ‘I have to earn money’. 17% of Caribbean students and 7% of Pakistani students cited this as a reason. There was also a distinction made between schools. Schools 1 and 3 scored with 9% and 10% respectively compared to 5% in School 2. This difference between school contexts may be explained by social class or pupils’ families’ existing social status. As Table 3 demonstrates, the majority of the pupil population at School 2 falls within the category of lower middle class. Perhaps this indicates that pupils with limited financial resources are less prone to worry simply because you cannot lose what you never had. However, the fact that School 3, which is closer in composition to School 2, has a similar result to School 1 shows that this cannot fully explain the difference. Perhaps then difference comes from a different ethos both in school but also in the wider collective community each school serves.

**Table 1: Social composition of pupil population in each school**

	Low status	Lower middle status	Upper middle status	Upper status
School 1	5%	20%	23%	52%
School 2	17%	55%	18%	11%
School 3	17%	49%	20%	14%

Having financial worries and being focused on alleviating financial constraints in the present is significant since it can be viewed as detrimental to the longer term goal of securing employability through education. Given the impact that post compulsory qualifications have on future earnings (and with it, future life chances) this is a point

of significance for educational policy. How to get rid of the 'dual economy' in higher education and more effectively widen participation? This is concerning in current times as recent research on the impact of the recession predicts that one in five young people who collected their GCSE results this year could be on unemployment benefits/ Jobseekers Allowance by the time they are 21, if trends are in line with the 1980s recession. Those without qualifications will be worst off (Dorling, 2009).

### *Feelings and attitudes towards school*

With ethnic diversity apparent in all the schools and classrooms, as well as different personalities and learning needs, assessment of the classroom environment is an important facet of the study. The survey offered a valuable opportunity to elicit an accurate picture of the factors which pupils consider contribute towards the existence of both a positive and negative atmosphere within each school. At a very general level pupils' views of school were the same in all three schools. Predominantly pupils viewed school with 'mixed feelings'. This is not a surprising finding but nonetheless one which warrants further examination. Pupils' identities as learners are formed and learning fostered or diminished in everyday interactions in school and in classrooms. As they learn to interpret and evaluate their own experience through frames of reference used by those around them, they quickly acquire prevailing attitudes towards learning.

Attention should turn first to school context. At Schools 1 and 2, 45% of pupils had strong positive feelings about school. School 3 was marginally lower at 40%. Positive feelings about school does appear to be connected in part to ethnicity. 48% of White pupils, 44% of Caribbean pupils and just 34% of Pakistani pupils had strong positive feelings about school. Pupils' perceptions of school work also show disparities. 18 % of White pupils compared with 9 % of Pakistani and 7 % of Caribbean felt 'good' about school work. The degree to which ethnicity accounts for social alienation, acceptance and differences in feelings about school seems of crucial importance when data on school exclusions indicate that pupils from Caribbean and White and Caribbean groups are among the most likely to be permanently excluded from schools. Moreover at around 80% boys continue to dominate the numbers of permanent exclusions nationally which warrants study of how gender intersects with this.

Overall pupils felt positively about school work. This was the case for 89% of Pakistani and 85 % of White pupils. Caribbean pupils felt less positive at 74 % so this does fit the picture of black exclusions. More pupils felt they had unjust treatment with the judgment of individual academic performance. This was the case for 31 % of Pakistani, 28 % of White but just 20 % of Caribbean pupils.

Behaviour was cited as a reason for unjust treatment but this did differ according to ethnicity. White and Pakistani pupils had the same perceptions on this measure at 55%. Despite this, punishment, or the way sanctions were distributed among pupils was not seen as a significant reason for unjust treatment. Just 10% of Pakistani pupils, and 12 % of White pupils identified this as an issue. However, 73 % of Caribbean pupils felt that they had experienced unfair treatment because of behaviour. This factor would therefore seem to strongly shape Caribbean pupils' feelings about the school and is significant in light of the fact Caribbean pupils are most likely to be excluded from school at national level. At 30%, Caribbean pupils were twice more likely to feel the way sanctions were distributed among pupils was an issue compared to white and Pakistani pupils. This factor would seem to strongly shape Caribbean

pupils' feelings about the school and impacts on academic achievement. Combined with contextual factors such as the fact this group is more likely to suffer a dramatic event (which may cause conflict at home), this has adverse social implications. School should be a safe non confrontational space for pupils which is achieved through school climate and ethos. Most teachers would say that they do not treat pupils in a discriminatory manner (i.e. treating some pupils differently than others) and it is perhaps too simplistic to lay the blame on teachers. Further research should be done to investigate the complex reasons behind Caribbean pupils and behaviour.

Atmosphere in the classroom provoked different responses along ethnic lines. 45% of white respondents viewed the atmosphere in their classrooms as 'friendly and cohesive' compared with 35% of Caribbean and just 26% Pakistani pupils. This is a significant finding and may reflect the fact that Pakistani pupils are more likely to feel less social support in school from both teachers and peers which is significant when these social relations are often seen as an important protective factor. There was some difference between schools as well. 62 % of all pupils at School 3 felt their class was 'friendly and cohesive' compared with 58% at School 1 and 46% at School 2. In general, therefore, it seems that School 3 has created a more relaxed and more enjoyable classroom environment.

Overall most pupils indicated that several teachers liked them which show that despite the different power positions of teachers and pupils, there are good interpersonal relationships. In the eyes of students, teachers are likely to be supportive and are likely to motivate and enhance self-esteem. This was the case across all schools with 82 %, 88 % and 83 % of all pupils in Schools 1, 2 and 3 respectively. While there was not much difference in response according to school context, there was some difference in response according to ethnicity. 54 % of Pakistani pupils felt that several teachers liked them but 43 % did not know. This is in contrast to both Caribbean and White pupils who displayed more confidence. 60 % of Caribbean pupils felt several teachers liked them and 27 % did not know. 65 % of White pupils felt several teachers liked them and only 24 % did not know.

Although much research has focused on teacher-pupil relationships, what has emerged here is the need to consider pupil-pupil dynamics. The vast majority of pupils identified themselves as having several friends in school. This was the case across all three schools and all ethnic and social class groupings. However, while the relationships pupils have with teachers seem to be ubiquitously positive, social relations between pupils seemed to be more fraught with issues. The majority of pupils had a 'not unanimously positive experience' with peers in school. This was the case for all pupils across the social class and the ethnic divide. (84% of White pupils living in the inner city and 81% of those living on the outskirts; 91 % of inner city Pakistani compared with 90% on outskirts). There was a slight difference with Caribbean pupils. Those (working class) pupils living in the inner city were more likely to report a negative social experience than those (middle class) pupils living on the outskirts (90 % compared with 60 %). The combined influence of social class and ethnicity therefore does appear to be more pronounced for Caribbean pupils.

Hostile groups were identified in classrooms among White, Pakistani and Caribbean pupils (21%, 26% and 26% respectively). This perhaps is unsurprising as although I did not notice any hostility through overt means in the sense of name calling or abuse, hostility can feature in more subtle ways through indifference for instance. The fact that between a fifth and a quarter of all respondents reported hostility is substantial

and warrants further investigation of how pupils define their identities by drawing boundaries between themselves, and others. In addition to this bullying occurred 'occasionally' in all three schools. This was the case for 64 % at School 1, 70 % at School 2 and 57 % at School 3. 37 % of pupils at School 3 reported that bullying 'frequently' occurred. This was predominantly the case for all ethnic groups. However, bullying occurred in different places at different times according to the school context. At Schools 1 and 3, bullying occurred in the classroom, around school and outside school. At School 2, bullying mainly occurred outside the classroom, around school. This perhaps gives an indication of the different educational ethos and routine of each school.

Bullying was seen to occur because of a number of different factors. Pupils perceived bullying to occur between pupils living in different neighbourhoods. This was the case for 50 % of Caribbean pupils, 33% of Pakistani pupils and 36 % of White pupils. On this measure, there was variation between schools. Pupils attending School 2 were least likely to report any bullying between pupils living in different neighbourhoods at 21 %. Schools 1 and 3 which had a higher pupil catchment from Brunsmere scored 37% and 42% respectively. Bullying between pupils of different social backgrounds was most apparent at School 1 with 43% of pupils perceiving this as a problem compared with 18 % at School 2 and 28 % at School 3. This can be explained by the fact School 1 by far had the most diverse social class intake so difference on this basis would be more stark.

Pupils also felt that bullying occurred between pupils of different ethnicities. Perceptions of this varied according to ethnicity. White and Pakistani pupils shared more or less the same perceptions with equal scores of 36%. At 64%, far more Caribbeans felt that bullying occurred between pupils of different ethnicities.

Although pupils felt that setting was fair, the competitive, achievement oriented environment of school does seem to have had an impact on some pupils more than others. At 19% more Pakistani pupils perceived their class as highly individualised which has implications for participation, compared with 10% of White and 4% of Caribbean pupils. A range of reasons for this could be suggested. The institutional organisation of classes where pupils are seated individually at desks in rows with the expectation to sit quietly and often work independently discourages social interaction. Coupled with the fact that Pakistani pupils were more likely to perceive hostile groups in their classroom, the mediating effect is one of diminished confidence and insularity.

### **The Community Study**

Following this the community study gave further, in-depth analysis about pupils' perceptions of the meaning of 'ethnic' identification in their daily life; the sources of pride and shame that they owe to ethnicity as well as experiences with various forms of discrimination. The report highlighted variations in school experiences and the major factors that shape them, and highlighted implications for past and projected educational careers.

#### *Constraining Circumstances which have a knock on effect on overall wellbeing*

The majority of pupils and parents interviewed lived in areas of high social deprivation and some the circumstances of some families were complex and difficult.

Beginning with home environment and the constraints of social class some stereotypical characteristics of 'Broken Britain'<sup>2</sup> emerged such as lone parents and in particular hard pressed white mothers living on council estates with absent black fathers not on the scene. One interview with a Caribbean girl highlighted socioeconomic disadvantage and indicators of poverty through life history narrative. A number of risk factors were revealed which seemed to both emerge from and contribute to the emotional and economic climate within the home. Louise<sup>3</sup> lived between homes, sometimes with her maternal grandparents and sometimes with her white mother. Her mother had been a heroin addict for a number of years and had worked as a prostitute. She had spent time in respite centres. As such Louise's childhood was extremely chaotic with a host of detrimental experiences which she felt directly impinged on her receptiveness to schooling and education.

She used to be a prostitute. I used to see all the different...I used to see some right rubbish. One time she had this guy look after me and he wouldn't let me go to the toilet so I was like... I had to do a wee in the corner of my room so he rubbed my face in it. So then when my Mum came back I told her. And then I saw this guy just knocking her about in the kitchen, because there was only like that much space between to two cupboards, so this guy had just got her head going 'bang, bang, bang' against the two cupboards, it was mad, it was weird, proper crazy (interview).

Growing up in an environment with frequent exposure to domestic violence brought about intense feelings of frustration and helplessness. Some of these problems meant that Louise was taking on adult responsibilities from a very young age such as making meals. Recollection of memories brought about a sense of grave sadness,

I used to have to make my own breakfast and stuff when I was three I was making cups of tea and stuff, but yeah I spilt Rice Krispies and milk once and I got a right slap for it. One time my Mum was drugged out in bed with a Black man and I was three. And I knew my Nan's address, phone number and everything. I had one shoe on and one sock on the other foot. I had my pram with my doll in my pram, the doll was more wrapped up than me ...

There was a tendency for some disaffected girls to mark the transition to adulthood in harmful ways as other studies have reported. In Louise's case, there were a cluster of complex interconnected issues, but in her words, 'I kind of like did all my adult stuff, like ages go when I was thirteen'. At the age of 12 she had a 23 year old boyfriend<sup>4</sup>. By 16 she had two police cautions. One was for carrying a weapon in a public place. The other was for aggressive behaviour. At the root seemed to be the intense sense of loss of her mother which she often experienced as rejection. In her interview she described two mothers, almost a Jekyll and Hyde characterisation. On one hand was her 'ideal' mother who engaged her in family times,

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<sup>2</sup> 'Broken Britain' was a statement used by David Cameron, who has since been elected Prime Minister. A sense of deep pessimism runs through society and a sense of lamenting Merry Old England. Family breakdown is frequently blamed as the cause of a variety of social ills.

<sup>3</sup> Pseudonyms have been used throughout the report to preserve the anonymity of respondents.

<sup>4</sup> This was known about and was on the Child Protection Register

Off drugs she was just amazing. When I used to go see her on Saturdays and the first time I saw her I was like, 'I don't want to go'. I was only allowed to see her for an hour. And then when I went to see her and everything it was just like..., she was healthy, she looked healthy, she was cooking meals everyday. (...)So she would just take us like... one time we went swimming, one time we went to the fair, one time she took us to the pictures, it was awesome, it really was.

The other side was the drug addicted mother who 'from being a kid she was just horrible to me'. Although she recognized that her mother's behaviour resulted from the effects of drug abuse, it caused huge emotional stress within Louise and investing her energy resources in work at school simply was not a luxury she could choose. One of Louise's teachers whom she had worked with since Y7 in the inclusion unit, confided that her behaviour problems had always increased when she lived with her mother. There were no firm boundaries in place so she and her younger sisters were allowed to stay up until as late as they liked listening to music and drinking alcohol.

Extended family however provided some structure and protection. Louise went through periods where she felt relief and stability and experienced consistency as a result of living with her grandparents,

When I was five my nan got a residence order for me! I had finally got away. My mum was sent to prison and I had got a home where I knew I could be myself and didn't have to worry about random drug addicts, who my mum used to let look after me so she could go and get money for her next fix, and the police knocking on the door (extract from Louise's English coursework).

She framed her grandparents as functioning through traditional gender role stereotypes so her grandmother is described as fulfilling the role of nurturer. In Louise's words she described her nan as 'one of them old wise owls (...) She knows what to say at the right times... she knows me page by page, she really does'. Her grandfather is described as a source of patriarchal power through his predictability of routine which served as an irritant but also as a source of protection,

...my Granddad's right grumpy (laughs). He's proper one of them old fashioned, old men. 'Shush the televisions on; I'm watching my programmes'...(.) 'Shush I am the phone', but when I'm on the phone he can talk, it's right annoying. And 'be in for half past ten because I am locking the gate, lights are going off....' the curtains get closed at half past six.

Her grandparents had set boundaries but these were simple and deemed reasonable by Louise, '...the only rules I've got is; respect my Nan and Granddad, be in when they tell me to and just go to School. Not bad really is it?' Sticking to these rules was a way of showing her grandparents respect. However dealing with ongoing problems and coping with a host of different stresses, meant that Louise started truanting heavily in Y9. Before long she was in a cycle where the more she missed school, the harder it would be to catch up,

I was like 'I can't be arsed to go to School', too many people were coming up to me saying 'oh why haven't you been in School..?' Do you know what I mean I don't think I could have coped with it? (...) That's what I thought there is no point in even trying to go to School because I am so behind with everything, I had missed like two years.

The reality was that by escaping the hum drum reality of school routine Louise was making her self more isolated and less integrated into social networks with peers. Her truancy lasted for two years and she returned in Y11, a crucial academic year which sets post 16 pathways. Despite the personal constraints she had to battle through during this period, emphasis was very much placed on the role of individual agency rather than placing blame on mitigating circumstances. In her interview Louise stated simply that 'I messed it all up' which projects the belief that she has caused her own educational failure. From this statement it is possible to see how education is inextricably bound up with self worth and confidence.

*Social relations within school were marked by ethnicity*

Pupils self segregated themselves according to ethnicity to varying degrees in all three schools. At School 1 there was also the added dimension of a predominantly white middle class catchment. Like so many other studies of teenagers in school, social groupings and peer networks were easily identified and made visible through discussion of cliques. Particular groups hung around in particular areas of the school. Summed up by one pupil, "Everyone is trying to fit in to different groups so they are not left out. (...) It is all to do with looks and stuff like". These cliques were widely referred to by the names used among teenagers at national level, "We have goths and stuff and then you have got chavs and then you have got people that think they are hard and people that we actually know are hard really..." Another pupil said much of the same, "we all just hang about with each other. Everyone goes in to different groups to be honest though". Pupils openly discussed social groupings in each school. Dress styles and music tastes were sites of 'coolness' which characterised pupils' discussions of social groupings. Pupils reported socialising with pupils from a range of different ethnic backgrounds so on the surface ethnicity did not appear on the face of it to be a significant issue in pupils' everyday social experience,

Emos and chavs were universally disliked. Discussion of these groups featured across all three schools and often provoked strong reaction, 'We have like Goths, Emos and Chavs and stuff like that. (...) I am just going to be truthful, I hate them'. (Caribbean boy, School 2). This was a pattern which emerged through all schools but to varying effect. Discussion in all three schools tended to focus on these two main social groupings which is where the focus here lies.

Emos and Goths invoked a particular type of white ethnicity which sat uncomfortably with all Pakistani and Caribbean pupils interviewed. The terms emo and goth were used interchangeably to distinguish a group which were situated on the periphery of the everyday world of school, 'Goths stick together, they just get to the point where they just don't...they just do their own thing'. In understanding why emos were a peripheral group four main dimensions of this identity emerged. First was the salience of ethnicity, 'it's mostly White people'. Identities were marked by particular clothing choices, 'They just wear dark clothes, grow their hair right long and everything they wear is Black'. Some pupils displayed blurred identities, 'there are some people where they are kind of goths because they like listening to the rock music and that, but they don't dress themselves like goths, I don't know they just like listening to rock music and all that'. The boundaries which demarcated social identity could be fluid and could be experimented with. However it was pupils which fell fully into emo identity that provoked discussion. Emo tastes were marked differently with preference to listening to heavy rock metal rather than the mainstream's preference for R 'n' B

music. It was the specific ideology underlying emo/ goth identity which caused offence,

There is this guy, I am not too sure what his name is but he always talks about how his life is crap and that he wants to die. It is really depressing being around him. You say 'shut up there is nothing wrong with your life, you should be happy'.

The study did not gain interviews with any emos, but it would have been interesting to consider whether this identity was a reaction to class consciousness and a means of disassociating themselves from the lazy image of the white lower class 'chav'. Emos were at the polar opposite of chavs, which was another branch of 'white' identity embodied by pupils at Schools 2 and 3 in particular. Chavs were the lower class white identity. At School 2, a focus group discussion unpicked the 'style' and ethos of this specific version of whiteness and much of this focus was on chavs' supposed misguided self perception of their 'hardness',

Chavs think they are hard and they listen to music daily, like every two minutes.

Yeah they just walk around thinking that they are hard but when it comes to fighting they are pussies then, they can't hack it (Focus group discussion, Caribbean boys).

Pupils' descriptions fit Tyler's (2008, p. 17) interpretation of 'disgust reactions' received by 'the grotesque and comic figure of the chav'. 'Hardness' was a term widely used to delineate prestige to physical strength, 'he's reet hard' and on corridors at Schools 2 and 3, chavs would talk of 'banging people out'. However, Caribbean pupils in particular associated White Chav identity with physical weakness and empty threats. This arose in a number of discussions. When asked how they give the impression of looking hard, pupil responses showed that they considered them wannabes. In these discussions pupils mimicked how chavs walked,

...they walk with a limp like they are something else.

They walk like they have got a disabled leg but they really haven't.

They walk around like that (enacting broken leg walk)

Discussion also focused on their clothing choices. 'They have their trousers down to their ankles (...). They have their hood up and they listen to music' and 'They look like drag queens basically. Chavs, they try to look nice but they really can't'. Chavs wore too much jewellery 'they wear all that fake gold from Argos or somewhere like that' and were associated with wearing certain clothing brands which were often sportswear,

'They wear trackies and stuff.

Yeah like Umbro, Addidas tracksuits, Nike trainers. And Chav boys always tuck...why would they tuck nice jeans in to socks? You look at their jeans, like nice G-Star jeans and they tuck them in to their Primark socks'.

In lessons they were viewed as been the likeliest group in school to get into trouble.

They show-off.

Yeah they show-off and mouth off to teachers. And basically they want to be the centre of attention.

Yeah all the time.

Yeah they are always getting in to trouble and they get sent out.

They just mess about.

They don't do work.

They swear at teachers all that time. They think they are something that they are not (Caribbean boys, School 2).

Although ethnicity was not used as a defining characteristic of these groupings in pupils' talk, visibly this was the case.

#### *Constraining ethnic stereotypes*

Pupils had very definite ideas in identifying stereotypes for Pakistanis and Caribbeans. This is a point which featured in equal measure across all three schools. Since stereotypes have social implications and can provide a picture of how different groups are perceived, it is useful to consider how pupils believe they are seen. These young people had learnt and were exposed to the fact that people occupy different structural positions in society. For Pakistanis, their choices were limited to working in the service industry, 'working in a take-away or being something like a taxi driver. Or owning a shop on a corner' (Focus group interview, School 2). For some pupils limited ethnic stereotyping of their identity provided the motivation (and internal resistance) to 'prove them wrong',

Because you know when people look at you they just look at you and you can prove them wrong basically because they are like 'oh he is going to be working in a take-away' or 'oh he is going to be a taxi-driver' something like that, so it is just proving them wrong and achieving what you can (Pakistani boy, School 2).

Pakistanis were also commonly linked with terrorism, 'He's a suicide bomber, he is from Taliban'. That goes for boys and girls'. (Pakistani girl, School 3). Being viewed as having an identity that is at odds with British cultural norms meant that Pakistani pupils felt more prone to stigmatisation. This was a point which came about when discussing future ambitions,

I would want to go to America but then the thought of all the bad stuff that happens there - that really scares me....the racist type of things, history just scares me to go there, thinking what could happen to you, what the police do and all that. ...like just because you are Asian you are a crime. I just find it

unfair and scary because if it happened to me then I do not know what I could do and I wouldn't have any family there to look after me and get me out and stuff. (...) I knew before my history lessons that America was quite racist just from general knowledge about terrorists and George Bush. I just didn't like America, but I like New York and San Francisco and all that, they are somewhere you want to go but then when you think about what could happen you just don't want to go (Pakistani girl, School 1).

Pakistani ethnic identity could thus constrain future life projections. Being Pakistani with its linked associations of terrorism meant being labelled and set apart. While this girl shared the ambition to travel with many other young people, her destination of choice would not be an option because of the danger this could pose. Having a reflexive stance on the choices available stemmed from education as she had been learning about black civil rights in citizenship lessons. This shows how meaningful education can be and with it, how self understandings are formed and boundaries erected.

The stereotype for Caribbeans was viewed completely differently. Unjust stereotyping of the Caribbean community arose frequently in discussions with Caribbean pupils and with it a sense of outrage, 'Black boys get stereotyped 'oh they are Black....' Yes Black boys do stupid stuff, so do White boys, so do Asian boys' (Caribbean girl, School 3). Stereotypes for Caribbean boys in particular were highly negative,

Either being drug dealers, criminals, being in jail or...

Not getting any GCSEs.

Yes that's right or just not getting any GCSEs.

Yes you just mess up your life. (School 2, focus group discussion)

The detrimental impact of these cannot be underestimated given the negative picture of achievement by Caribbean boys demonstrated by national statistics. Often the only portrayals young people are offered are of these types rather than the educated, professional identity achieved through social mobility which the goal of education attempts to endorse. Society's expectations of Caribbean boys were felt to be extremely low even to the point of being dangerous, 'He sells drugs, he uses knives and guns, he is not a very nice person, be scared of that person, you will get your phoned robbed' (Caribbean girl, School 3). Similarly at School 2 a focus group discussion described much of the same,

And yes if you are a Black person with a hood they straight away assume that you are a criminal.

Yes a gangster and everything.

If you see a Black guy with a hood on then you are just going to walk the other way aren't you? (School 2, focus group discussion)

All these show awareness of behaviours which demarcate ethnic identity. Blackness is symbolically threatening with its associations of drug culture, crime and therefore danger, which means that Caribbeans should be avoided or shunned in public spaces. Although there is a sense of empowerment which comes from being conceived of as a dangerous entity, this also functions a form of disempowerment. Caribbean girls considered the masculine stereotype in terms of actors in potential romantic relationships. This too presents a negative image, 'he is a woman beater, he is a man slag, he cheats on his girlfriends. That is the typical Black guy' (Caribbean girl, School 3).

Caribbean girls shared some of the same stereotypes, 'She's a bitch, she's right hard, she'll bang you, don't mess with her'. Do you what I mean? Do you know how many times that has happened to me? It's unbelievable. (Caribbean girl, School 3). This girls' belief was drawn from everyday lived experience and during the course of her interview, she cited a number of examples,

...these girls they were on the corner and I could hear them saying something and I thought 'oh I'll leave it', so then I had gone in the shop and I came back out and I heard them saying something again. And they were like 'Hey here' and I turned round and I was like, 'have you got a problem?' And then I walked off and one of them was like 'oh she's Black, she'll bang you, shut up', do you know what I mean?

All modes of identity construction are placed outside the 'norm and with this came discrimination. Pupils drew on a number of examples of unfair treatment but these stemmed from experiences in the wider world,

Do you know what does my head in about people these days and it is racism (and the) Police. It happened the other week, there was a group of White lads, on two different days though, there was a group of White lads on the City Gardens and the Police drove past, they all had the hoods up and everything and the Police drove past. There was a group of Black lads with their hoods up, there were about twelve of them. The Police stopped asked to search them and brought twelve Police Officers.

Suspicion was directed at these boys because they were wearing 'hoodies'<sup>5</sup> but it was perceived that preferential treatment was given to white boys, who were also wearing hoods. The message that is received is clear. Black boys wearing hoods are more likely to be trouble causers than their white counterparts. Complaints focused on the excessive use of resources, 'twelve police officers'. The assumption is made that racism explains differential treatment between groups. This way of seeing the world is constraining in the sense of holding people back from fulfilling their potential,

What we have noticed today in fact, we was on about it today at the shops, I'm not racist obviously but there was a group of White people, a group of Asian people and then a group of Black people, it was right weird. (...) There was me, my boyfriend and his brother and we are all Black, and Cara who is White

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<sup>5</sup> A hoodie is a hooded sweatshirt. In Britain the hoodie has become emblematic of young people and street culture with its associations of crime, aggression and drugs. David Cameron, now the Prime Minister led a 'hug a hoodie' campaign as leader of the Conservative party in 2006.

and then there was Harry, Dale and a few other people and then Lorrell who is Black so we were like the mixed group and then there was a bunch of Black people, a bunch of White people, a bunch of Asian people.

Despite being hyper aware of ethnic groupings within school, pupils displayed ambivalence about why they occurred. Probing into why these groupings occurred always received a uniform, "I don't know".

However it became evident that the main was not between White and Black pupils, but rather between Caribbean and Pakistani pupils. This was a thread which was pulled out over observations of a number of interactions within the schools. Sometimes these divisions came out seemingly playfully but they were always instigated by Caribbeans against Pakistanis. In a focus group discussion about connections to other countries, one Caribbean boy commented, 'Yes Pakistan. They used to run round playing football in bare feet' [laughs] to which the Pakistani boy responded with, 'Ha ha no they didn't'. Later on when asking a Pakistani boy why having more Pakistani teachers would be a good thing, the same Caribbean boy responded with, 'They have more fear of terrorists. [Laughs]' to which the Pakistani boy responded with, 'I'll slap you you Black shit' [laughs] (Focus group, School 2) Although both boys were laughing which suggests harmless fun, there was a deeper layer of significance behind these exchanges. These were not examples of injecting humour into social interaction. Neither did it seem to be a marker social intimacy. Rather these were micro insults given by the Caribbean boy to the Pakistani boy and the laughter from both boys served to reduce the potential tension. When the meaning of these remarks was challenged the Caribbean boy stated, 'No it is just a joke; we are only messing about with each other'. However, this was a feeling in all three schools which suggests a wider social division between the two groups than school based issues. What was significant was that Pakistanis tended to 'accept' these exchanges Although there was evidence of actively challenging it through 'I'll slap you you Black shit' This was not a case of resistance within accommodation but seemed to signal subservience.

One to one interviews revealed a deeper sense of division on ethnic grounds. Several times during the course of her interview one Caribbean girl stated that she is 'not racist'. She would draw attention to her mixed race positioning to justify this as though this afforded greater legitimacy yet her discourse revealed deep set negative assumptions,

I don't know because I have got loads of friends who are White. I don't really tend to get on with Asian people. (...)I don't know they just think they are better than everyone else. (...)They stay in groups. One thing I hate them for is that they stick together; if they do anything then they are together. Because I think..., I'm not an Asian person so I wouldn't know but Asian people see it as 'oh we need to stick together as a group', not none of these code wars. That's what I think because Black people get the most stick for everything and it's true. I'm not just saying it because I am Black myself, they really do, and Black people do get stick for a lot of things. So I think instead of all this war going on between people everyone needs to come together, think about the country (Caribbean girl).

These Asian people right, I watched it on the news the other day, our soldiers came back from the thing and they were stood (shouting) 'oh you are all

murderers' but yet suicide bombers what's that? That's murdering; do you know what I mean? They are fighting for our country. I am not being funny, I am not a racist person, but if they don't like us fighting for our country then they need to go and fight for their country (Caribbean girl).

'Our soldiers' references this girl's strong sense of British national identity and patriotism. In this sense she feels she belongs to mainstream Britain which also fits with the survey's findings that Caribbean pupils felt as socially connected as white pupils. The notion of patriotism occupies a significant place in her emotional world which continues in her discussion,

Yes, they come in to our country, I am not a racist person, but they come in to our country and say 'you need to not do this; you are not allowed to call your Christmas lights 'Christmas lights' because we don't believe in Christmas'. Christmas is Christmas, Christmas lights are Christmas lights, do you know what I mean? We don't say 'oh you're not allowed to celebrate Eid because we don't believe in Eid', we would get bleeding right done by the Police because we were bring racist but they are allowed to publically say that we are not allowed to call our Christmas lights 'Christmas lights'.

Immigration and the influx of different ethnic groupings into school, seemed to have brought about a sense of national traditions being under threat. White identity as well was unstable and prone to attack as seen in the earlier discussion of emos and chavs and at School 3 white boys complained of being called 'white bastards'. White middle class boys at School 1 felt that they had tried to forge friendships with Caribbean boys through shared music interests but these attempts were rebuffed.

#### *Neighbourhood location as a significant marker of identity*

Pupils saw their neighbourhoods as an important context and unpacking respondents' perceptions and experiences of where the boundaries around particular places lie emerged as an important identity activity. Neighbourhoods are made up of people and communities in places and there is great stability and cohesion in familiar settings.

At School 3, Pakistani respondents felt uncomfortable being in Tannery Rise after school hours because this meant waiting at the bus stop which brought about the threat of physical and verbal abuse from the white community. This shaped their decisions about whether to stay for after school clubs.

Another analytical strand of identity and place lay with belonging and memory through public sites. This gave an interesting angle on how ethnic identities mesh and intersect with spatial location. The material culture of Northcity's industrial past seemed to resonate with Pakistani respondents as interviews and conversations often highlighted their family's individual, and also the collective input that the Pakistani community had in Northcity's past. For one high achieving Pakistani girl her connection to Northcity was deeply rooted in narratives of her grandfather's working life in heavy industry. When shopping in the shopping centre in the east of the city, her presence in Northcity today was materialized through a statue which for her reanimated her grandfather's past life and created for her a sense of meaning,

It's like my granddad came and he was a (name of industry) worker in NorthCity Works. And you know in (the local shopping centre) where they have the statues of the iron men and we walk passed there and my aunty goes,

‘that’s your granddad there’, and the reason why she said that is because people that came from hot countries and middle eastern countries, like India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, they could stand in heat like that so that is why most of them jobs were given to Asian people. (...) Yes most of them jobs were for Asian people because Asian people could stand that heat of working in an area of humidity like that, so that is why.

A statue memorialising workers from Northcity’s industrial past contextualises this girl’s self as an ethnicity and her presence in England. The forms that connect pupils to neighbourhoods, to cities, to England then may seem trivial at surface level but the underlying threads of meaning are significant. Here we see how her aunt instigates this dialogue with a seemingly innocuous object. The family plays an important role in preserving a sense of rooted connection and ‘cultural imagination’.

The physical divide between neighbourhoods was entrenched further through the existence of postcode gangs in the wider community. An important part of identity for both Caribbean and Pakistani pupils and particularly for boys was bound up with allegiance to area, ‘It’s basically if you live in Northcity4 you are with Northcity4, if you live in Northcity3 you are with Northcity3’. It was physically evident in graffiti around the schools which as an act prompted competition, “there is ‘Northcity4’ and ‘Northcity5’ written all over, then someone writes across ‘Northcity3’, then some people put threats up, then someone crosses that off and puts ‘Northcity4’. It’s all over’. Outside school pupils would also wear coloured bandannas to symbolise their allegiance. This was not permitted in school and was more of an issue in Schools 2 and 3. At School 1, pupils living in the south west of the city were not involved in it. The issue of postcode gangs frequently emerged in discussions with both boys and girls. A Caribbean girl explained what would happen if she walked into rival gang territory,

So if I walked in to Northcity3 with a green bandanna on, I would probably get knocked out for wearing a green bandanna in a black bandanna area. And if a black bandanna came in to a green bandanna area the black bandanna would get banged for wearing a black bandanna in a green bandanna area and same with all of them.

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Trying to ascertain whether post code gangs were linked to ethnicity got mixed responses. For some it was associated with ethnic minorities only. It was something between Pakistanis, Somalis and Yeminis. White pupils were often viewed as posing empty threats, ‘I don’t think there are any white people involved (there are people in Tannery Rise) that joke about it but they won’t actually (go ahead and fight)’. White pupils at School 3 did however align themselves to the Northcity3 gang.

Overall much of this was bound up with ideas of ‘hard’ masculinity and involvement in gangs marked the transition to adulthood. It was a way to assert identity but the seriousness of the implications of this can however not be underestimated since there had been shootings in Brunsmere linked to gang wars. Visual reminders of this were very much evident, ‘If you walk past the barbers now when the shutters are down you can see the bullet holes’. It served as a stark reminder of what a Pakistani mother said ‘If you have not got your mind over matter you can get pulled in to things but it is your choice (...) you go the right way or the wrong way’.

*Imaginary lands providing aspiration*

The Caribbean provided some pupils with an aspiration. Ethnic identity connected strongly with roots and ideas about adult life often invoked an ambition to 'return' to the country in which their grandparents originated. When asked about what he wanted to do in his adult life one Caribbean boy said, 'Set up here and then move to the Caribbean. Then I would set up a business in the Caribbean. (...) That is my heritage I think'. For this boy the Caribbean was innately connected to his identity and making a return in adult life was about forging a meaningful connection to something lost. Indeed the 'nostalgic dreamland of their ancestral home' (Premdas, 1996, p.13) came through in individual discussions. The Caribbean was an imaginary place which met a need. It had a separate identity from the UK with its tropical climate, reggae, rastas, national flag, and national food which inspired exciting folklore. They had heard about it through family stories and also in the curriculum. Y10s and Y11s were covering the Poems from Different Cultures segment for their GCSE exams and there was a poem called 'Island Man' (Grace Nichols) which is about a man from the Caribbean who has moved to London. The poem is extremely visual in its imagery of these two distinct worlds.

### **Conclusion**

Using quantitative and qualitative data techniques to explore pupils' lived experiences at three multicultural schools in England has generated rich data about how some Caribbean and Pakistani students 'perform' their identities and how they see their lives and worlds. Ethnicity provided a core part of identity but ethnic identity is shown here to be ambivalent. Meshing with gender and social class it sometimes is structurally constraining. Sometimes it is used as a defence mechanism. At other times it forms potentially constraining stereotypes.

The first section analysed the results of the Survey Report and found that school context was not a major factor lying behind varying school performances and diverting educational careers. Instead the constraints lying behind ethnicity as it intersects with social class and home environment was a key determinant in how pupils behaved and performed in school. Within school Pakistani pupils displayed the least confidence. Although they had formed good friendships and felt happy about school work, they felt insecure about school atmosphere. Caribbean pupils on the other hand felt more positive about school but felt their behaviour in school was assessed unfairly. Relationships with other pupils, rather than teachers seemed to lay at the root and this was a point explored in the community study's discussion of social groupings. Ethnicity dictated social groupings and Emos and Goths invoked a particular type of white identity which sat uncomfortably with all Pakistani and Caribbean pupils interviewed. Pupils shared very definite ideas of ethnic stereotypes which constrained individual identity to some degree. Finally we see how pupils strived to root themselves and establish meaningful identity markers. Membership in postcode gangs asserted a strong sense of masculinity identity for boys. Living and being English contained ambiguities as we saw. On one hand, in the Pakistani girl's account we can see how some pupils feel a strong sense of connection to Northcity through a material object. Here her family had played an important role in giving her a sense of rooted connection. On the other hand we see through the Caribbean boy's account what Premdas (1996, p.13) termed the 'nostalgic dreamland of their ancestral home'. The Caribbean as a place filled the void of something missing. Overall it is against this varied and ambiguous background that educational policy has to be

analysed and new coherent strategies need to be developed to make education provision more equitable.

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